



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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SCAQMD PETITIONS ITS HEARING BOARD TO SHUT DOWN EXIDE TECHNOLOGIES UNTIL EMISSIONS CONTROLS IMPROVED

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) today filed a petition with its Hearing Board – an independent administrative law panel – for an order for abatement that if approved, would require Exide to shutter all lead smelting operations until its air pollution control systems are improved and deemed adequate to control arsenic emissions.

“Exide has had recurring operational problems this year and a troubled compliance history over the past several years,” said Barry Wallerstein, SCAQMD’s executive officer. “These problems have resulted in excess emissions of lead and arsenic – two highly toxic metals – that have imposed a significant health risk to people living or working in the surrounding area.”

Attorneys for SCAQMD and Exide will meet with the Hearing Board next week to schedule hearings, potentially including public meetings in communities around Vernon, on the petition.

The petition alleges that Exide has failed to adequately control gaseous pollutant emissions including arsenic. The air pollution control systems on Exide’s smelting furnaces rely on the maintenance of negative air pressure in the furnace system to ensure that pollutants don’t escape into the environment prior to passing through an air pollution control system. Monitoring of Exide’s control systems this fall showed that they did not maintain negative pressure during a significant portion of the time.

Since Exide failed to maintain negative pressure in its furnaces as part of its air pollution control system, it has and continues to violate several SCAQMD rules, the petition alleges. SCAQMD issued a notice of violation to Exide for violating these rules on Oct. 8. The Hearing Board has the option to allow Exide to continue to operate pending final compliance.

A health risk assessment, approved in March, showed that the facility’s arsenic

emissions were causing an unacceptable health risk to residents in southeast Los Angeles County. As a result, Exide was ordered to develop a risk reduction plan. The plan is now being reviewed by SCAQMD staff.

In July, the agency issued a violation notice to the facility for continuing to operate after extreme heat melted an entire air pollution control system. In September, SCAQMD issued a violation to Exide for failing to notify the public of an unplanned shutdown of its lead equipment. Also on two occasions in September, SCAQMD ordered Exide to reduce its production by 15 percent when air monitors near the plant showed that Exide had exceeded permissible levels of lead in outdoor air under the agency's Rule 1420.1.

Today, SCAQMD issued two more notices of violation – one for exceeding the single-stack lead emission limit contained in Rule 1420.1 and the other for not curtailing its emissions by the required amounts.

The agency is now developing proposed changes to its Rule 1420.1 that would impose additional requirements on lead-acid battery recycling plants to reduce their emissions of toxic air contaminants. For detailed information on SCAQMD's compliance activities at Exide, see <http://www.aqmd.gov/prdas/AB2588/Exide/Exide.html>.

Exide Technologies, located at 2700 S. Indiana Street in Vernon, is one of only two lead-acid battery recycling plants west of the Rockies. In operation since 1922, the plant currently recycles 23,000 to 41,000 batteries daily.

SCAQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

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